



Look For Large Birds In Winter

Winter is a good time to see raptors

Hibernation and dormancy are words many people associate with Missouri's outdoors in winter, but in the bird world, things are far from comatose at this time of year.

Migratory visitors, increased viewing opportunities due to sparse foliage, and early courtship activities makes winter a good birding time in this area. All times of the year have bird-viewing pleasures specific to that season. In winter, it's a great time to look and listen for hawks, owls, and other large hunting birds.

Bald eagles get much of the publicity in this region in winter, but they're not the only bird that's a special sight. Seeing red-tailed hawks on roadsides in winter may be a frequent occurrence, but it's still a head-turning event for most people whenever one is spotted. Part of the reason is size. It is hard to miss these large birds (up to three pounds in weight) and their buff-colored breasts. For those who take a closer look through binoculars or camera lenses, a red-tailed hawk's fierce look adds to the appeal. Then, of course, there is its defiant-sounding scream which is a well-known call of the wild.

Although red-tailed hawks are highly efficient predators, they aren't the bothersome farm pests as they are often portrayed. Red-tailed hawks take a greater variety of prey than any other North American raptor except the golden eagle, but much of the hawk's diet consists of creatures other than poultry. Between 70 and 85 percent of a red-tailed hawk's diet is mice, rats, moles, squirrels, rabbits, and other small mammals. A variety of smaller birds make up an additional 10 to 15 percent of food items.



Red-tailed hawks are more visible in winter due to a lack of foliage.

Red-tailed hawks aren't the only species of hawk in Missouri. Cooper's hawks, sharp-shinned hawks, kestrels, northern harriers, and red-shouldered hawks are among the other types of hawks seen. If you ever wondered why hawks are frequently seen along roads, look at the surrounding area. The brushy edges and adjoining fields along many of our roads are home to many of the small mammals upon which hawks feed. Hawks can be found in Missouri throughout the year, but a lack of foliage in winter makes these birds more visible.

Owls are heard more often than they're seen in winter. Several species of

owls are found in Missouri and all are active throughout the year. However, winter is when most owl species residing in Missouri begin courtship and nesting rituals. As a result, winter and early spring is a good time to hear owls.

Owls provide benefits to humans through their predation of mice, rats, and other small mammals which can be pests. If you're lucky enough to find an owl roosting site or have safe access to a barn loft where owls may seek haven on occasion, you may find owl pellets. Most owls produce small pellets that are by-products of their eating habits. Smaller creatures are swallowed whole by an owl during a night of hunting. At a later time, indigestible bones, fur, and feathers are coughed up in firm, cylindrical pellets. Sometimes several pellets can be found at a site where an owl roosts or takes shelter.

Vultures are another large soaring bird that are more visible in winter, particularly at overnight roosting sights where they gather in groups in large, leafless trees. Though humans frequently have a low opinion of vultures (or "buzzards" as they are frequently called), these birds provide a benefit to humans through their consumption of dead animal matter.

People can get more information about birds they can see in winter and where good spots to view them are located at their nearest Missouri Department of Conservation office. Nature-viewing information is also available at <mdc.mo.gov/node/4469>.

—Francis Skalicky, Media Specialist

Joplin Office in the Wildcat Glades Conservation & Audubon Center

201 W. Riviera Drive, Suite B, Joplin, MO 64804 • mdc.mo.gov/node/292



The Joplin Conservation Office, located in the Wildcat Glades Conservation & Audubon Center, is your local connection to Missouri's fish, forests, and wildlife. Stop by and purchase hunting and fishing permits, attend a nature program, go for a hike, enjoy a picnic, or access Shoal Creek. Within the 190 acres of Wildcat Park, you will find a diverse mix of wildlife habitats rich with flora and fauna. From I-44, take exit 6, and turn south on MO-86. Turn right on Riviera Drive to enter Wildcat Park.

JOPLIN OFFICE HOURS:

Monday–Friday: 8 AM–5 PM
Closed all state holidays.

AUDUBON CENTER HOURS:

Tuesday–Saturday: 9 AM–5 PM
Sunday: 1–5 PM (March–October)

TO REGISTER FOR A PROGRAM:

Programs are free. Call **417-629-3423** to sign up for a program requiring registration. If you are unable to attend a program, please call and cancel as a courtesy to those on the waiting list.

Stella Eagle Day Event

January 23 • Saturday • 10 AM–3 PM
Stella Veteran's Memorial Park
(Stella)

No registration required (all ages)

The fish-filled streams of southwest Missouri are a favorite winter draw for bald eagles. Join the Missouri Department of Conservation staff, the community of Stella, and Missouri Master Naturalists for an eagle-viewing opportunity. There will be spotting scopes set up and fun educational activities for all ages throughout the day.



January and February Events

Kids' Christmas Bird Count

January 2 • Saturday • 9 AM–1 PM
Wildcat Glades Conservation & Audubon Center (Joplin)
Call 417-782-6287 to register (ages 7–17)
Kids, enjoy a morning just for you and the birds. Discover the excitement of bird watching in the tradition of the annual Christmas Bird Count. Participants will learn birding and binocular basics in the classroom before heading outside for the bird count. Experienced birders from the Ozark Gateway Audubon Society Chapter, Missouri Audubon, and staff will lead mentored birding experiences with the participants. The morning will end with a tally of total birds observed and a special thanks to the Ozark Gateway Society for providing awards and lunch for all. Remember to dress for the weather and be prepared for a moderate rated hike.

Master Naturalist Training Public Interest Meeting

January 4 • Monday • 6:30–8:30 PM
Walter Woods Conservation Area (Joplin)
Registration required (ages 18–adult)
Come discover how Missouri Master Naturalists mix science with service. This orientation meeting is for individuals interested in joining the local conservation service chapter. Master Naturalists are given special training regarding nature in the region where chapters are based. Members volunteer at public events, conduct education demonstrations, participate in field trips, and hold social events tied to a shared love of nature. To become a certified Master Naturalist, participants must complete an initial training course and complete eight hours of advanced training. They must also contribute 40 hours of natural resource-related volunteer service through the local chapter.

Trapping And Hide Preparation

January 9 • Saturday • 3–4:30 PM
Walter Woods Conservation Area (Joplin)
Registration required (ages 7–adult)
Discover the heritage of trapping by learning the basics of how to prepare your furs to be sold or tanned. Finishing and drying your own hides can be a very fulfilling way to end your hunting and trapping season. We will cover what a buyer looks for in a quality hide and how to flesh, clean, stretch, salt, and store your hides. All equipment will be provided.

Predator Hunting

January 14 • Thursday • 6–9 PM
Walter Woods Conservation Area (Joplin)
Registration required (all ages)
Come join us as we cover the aspects of predator hunting in Missouri, including coyote and bobcats. This program will cover tactics, calling techniques, firearms, and safety for hunting these illusive predators.

Short-eared Owl Hike

January 15 • Friday • 4:30 PM–Dusk
Shawnee Trail Conservation Area (near Mindenmines)
Registration required (ages 8–adult)
It's winter in Missouri and short-eared owls may be seen flying low over native grasslands in search of mice, rabbits, and other small mammals. Join us during this evening hike to discover more about these and other feathered winter residents. Grab your binoculars and field guide. Remember to dress for the weather to experience this winter only event on the prairie.

Discover Nature Fishing Introduction To Trout Fishing

February 26 • Friday • 6–7:30 PM
Walter Woods Conservation Area (Joplin)
Registration required (ages 7–adult)
Have you ever wanted to go trout fishing but didn't know what to use or where to go? We will discuss locations to fish in southwest Missouri, essential equipment, basic fishing methods, lure selection, and how to handle, clean, and cook your catch. You will be ready to wet a hook on opening day March 1.

Duck Zone Workshop

March 2 • Wednesday • 7–9 PM
Wildcat Glades Conservation & Audubon Center (Joplin)
No registration required
The Conservation Department wants to know how hunters feel about duck season dates and zone boundary locations that have been in place for the past five years and what they would like to see for the next five years. Participants will have the opportunity to review long-term data about weather, migration, habitat use, harvest, and hunter opinions, and discuss their season dates and zone preferences with other hunters and Conservation staff. Hunter input gathered through the workshops, combined with hunter opinion surveys, will help establish Missouri's duck season dates and zones for the following five years.

Andy Dalton Shooting Range and Outdoor Education Center

4897 N. Farm Road 61, Ash Grove, MO 65604 • mdc.mo.gov/node/288



January and February Events

Woodworking For Wildlife

January 16 • Saturday • 8:30–11:30 AM • *Registration required (all ages)*

Want to take a more active approach to conservation? Join us and learn how to make a nesting box for the state bird, the eastern bluebird. We will explain how to cut these out of a single board and help you with the assembly of your own bluebird nesting box.

Metallic And Shotgun Shell Reloading Basics

January 23 • Saturday • 8:30–11:30 AM • *Registration required (ages 18 and up)*

Now is the time to start saving money while having fun reloading your own ammunition for hunting or target shooting. Join us for this basic course about reloading rifle, pistol, and shotgun shell ammunition because you will have great satisfaction breaking targets or shooting bull's-eyes using your own manufactured rounds. We will cover all aspects of reloading from brass care and preparation to bullet and primer selection and much more.

Firearms Basic Care And Cleaning

February 20 • Saturday • 8:30–11:30 AM • *Registration required (all ages)*

Join us to learn the basics of the care and cleaning of firearms. This program will include tips and techniques for all aspects of maintenance of your firearm. You may bring your own unloaded firearm to class or use ours.

Why All The Range Rules?



Safety is always the "golden rule."

In order to maintain safety for staff and public users, all ranges have established rules by which to operate their individual facilities. Not all ranges use the same set of safety rules to manage their facilities. The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) uses a simple set of basic rules due to having so many users with varying levels of experience and training. At all MDC staffed range facilities the basics are the same—keep the gun pointed in a safe direction, keep the gun unloaded and the action locked open so everyone can tell the gun is unloaded and safe, and keep your trigger finger off of the trigger until you are actually inside the shooting booth or station and ready to shoot. The most important safety rule we rely on is, of course, the "golden rule" and the first rule of firearm safety as outlined above—muzzle control.

At the Andy Dalton Shooting Range and Outdoor Education Center, we promote coming to the range with firearms unloaded and in a gun case. Many times people do not have a case for their gun so we require them to bring their firearms in with the muzzle pointed toward the sky to decrease the danger of ricochet due to the concrete floors and walkways. This makes the range safer for the crowds we see, especially on weekends, almost all year long. We hope if you choose to come to the Andy Dalton range, you will not find the rules so overwhelming that you cannot enjoy your shooting experience. Our primary mission is serving the hunting community by providing a safe place to practice and improve shooting skills. We, of course, welcome all shooters with varying interests and appreciate their patience and cooperation when some of our rules don't make sense to them or cause them to modify their practice to fit within our established range rules. We hope you find time soon to come to the range and get familiar with our range rules and how we operate the facility. We hope to see you on the range!

—Michael Brooks, Outdoor Education Center Supervisor



To get to the Andy Dalton Shooting Range and Outdoor Education Center, take US Highway 160 west of Willard, turn south on Farm Road 61, and go 2.5 miles, facility on the west side of road. Facilities include an outdoor education center and archery, rifle, pistol, and shotgun ranges, including skeet and trap.

HOURS:

September 14–April 14

Monday and Thursday: 9 AM–4:30 PM

Friday–Sunday: 12 NOON–4:30 PM

April 15–September 13

Monday: 9 AM–4:30 PM

Thursday: 9 AM–7:30 PM

Friday–Sunday: 12 NOON–4:30 PM

Closed Tuesdays, Wednesdays and all state holidays. Hours are subject to change.

FACILITIES AND FEES:

Available for individual and group use. Call for information and possible restrictions.

- Rifle/pistol range fee: \$3 per booth per hour
- Trap/skeet range fee: \$3 per person per round of 25 clay targets
- Shotgun patterning range: \$3 per person per hour
- Archery range: \$3 per person per hour
- Group use fee: \$20 per hour plus \$3 per round of 25 clay targets

TO REGISTER FOR A PROGRAM:

Programs are free. Call **417-742-4361** or email [<DaltonRange@mdc.mo.gov>](mailto:DaltonRange@mdc.mo.gov) to sign up for a program requiring registration. If you are unable to attend a program, please call and cancel as a courtesy to those on the waiting list.

Holiday Closings:

January 1 • New Year's Day and January 18 • Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
February 12 • Lincoln Day and February 15 • Washington's Birthday

Springfield Conservation Nature Center

4601 S. Nature Center Way, Springfield, MO 65804 • mdc.mo.gov/node/287



The Springfield Conservation Nature Center is located in southeast Springfield just west of US-65 off the James River Freeway (US-60). Indoors, enjoy nature exhibits, attend programs, purchase hunting and fishing permits, browse through a nature-related gift shop, and pick up free conservation brochures. Outdoors, enjoy three miles of hiking trails through a variety of natural communities. Call to schedule a naturalist-led program for your organized group.

CURRENT HOURS:

November 1–February 29

Building: Tuesday–Saturday: 8 AM–5 PM
Closed Sunday and Monday

Trails: Sunday–Saturday: 8 AM–6 PM

TO REGISTER FOR A PROGRAM:

Programs are free. Call **417-888-4237** to sign up for a program requiring registration. If you are unable to attend a program, please call and cancel as a courtesy to those on the waiting list.

Building, area, and trails closed:

January 1 • New Year's Day

Building closed:

February 12 • Lincoln Day

January Events

Owl Prowl And Evening Stroll

January 8 • Friday • 6–9 PM

No registration required (all ages)

Nesting season comes early for owls and they're already hooting in anticipation. The trails will be open and patrolled, so bring a flashlight and a walking partner because you're on your own. Dickerson Park Zoo docents will offer two indoor programs at 6:30 and 7:30 pm.

Discover Nature Fishing Lecture Series—Trout Fishing

January 12 • Tuesday • 7–8:30 PM

Registration begins December 15 (ages 7–adult)

Missouri has abundant trout fishing opportunities throughout the southern portion of the state. Come learn about current trout research and management activities from Fisheries Management Biologist Craig Fuller. Ralph Eichholz, from Missouri Trout Fishermen's Association, will also give a presentation on fly-fishing techniques for trout. Discussion topics will include equipment, casting, fly selection, and fly-tying. This is one of several indoor programs aimed to put more fish on the end of your line!

Story Time With Ms. Ladybug

January 13 • Wednesday, 11–11:30 AM

No registration required (ages 2–6)

Join Volunteer Naturalist Joyce Tolliver as she reads a nature story and shares activities with your 2–6 year olds. Please, no organized groups.

Eagle Days

January 16 • Saturday • 9 AM–4 PM

January 17 • Sunday • 12:30–4:30 PM

No registration required (all ages)

We're celebrating the annual return of bald eagles to Lake Springfield. This special event includes the indoor presence of Phoenix, a live bald eagle from Dickerson Park Zoo. Programs will be held in the nature center auditorium every hour on the hour from 9 am to 3 pm on Saturday and at 12:30, 1:30, 2:30, and 3:30 pm on Sunday. Stop by anytime and plan to spend about two hours. Opportunities to view bald eagles in the wild, with the assistance of volunteers and spotting scopes, will be available at the Lake Springfield Boathouse and Marina during event hours.

Conservation TEEN Club Woodworking For Wildlife

January 19 • Tuesday • 6:30–8:30 PM

Registration begins January 2 (ages 12–17)

Come and enjoy an evening building a bird feeder for you to take home. This is a great activity and will give something back to the wildlife we enjoy. Snacks and drinks will be provided. We will have the woodworking tools, unless you want to bring hand tools. (Please, no power tools.)

Birds At And Around The Nest Tales Of A Field Photographer

January 21 • Thursday • 7–8:30 PM

Registration begins January 2 (ages 11–adult)

Volunteer Naturalist and outdoor photographer Bob Ball shares his personal experiences of photographing nesting birds from his own backyard to birds in the field. This program is cosponsored by the Greater Ozarks Audubon Society.

Nature And The Arts—The Music Of 91 Acres By Emily Higgins

January 22 • Friday • 7–8 PM

Registration begins December 15 (ages 12–adult)

Local songwriter Emily Higgins will be joined by her brother John Higgins for an evening concert featuring her new collection of original music *91 Acres*. The collection was created after a Missouri landowner commissioned her to write songs about his property inspired by land reclamation, geographical features, and the beauty of nature. John Higgins is a multi-instrumentalist from St. Louis who will provide some magical touches with guitar, lap steel, and Dobro.

Hiking Club

January 23 • Saturday • 12 NOON–4 PM

Registration begins January 2 (ages 18–adult)

Looking for a nearby hiking trail? Follow Volunteer Naturalist Pat Stritzel along a trail at Fellows Lake. Bring water and wear comfortable hiking shoes. **Hike is three miles and rated as easy in difficulty.**

Fly-Tying Demonstration

January 23 • Saturday • 1–4 PM

No registration required (all ages)

Members of the Missouri Trout Fishermen's Association will be on hand to demonstrate basic fly-tying techniques. Stop by anytime and learn how combinations of feathers, yarn, and thread can imitate insects or other food that will fool a fish.

For Adults Only—Beginner Fly-Tying

January 23 • Saturday • 2–4 PM

Registration begins January 2 (ages 18–adult)

Tying flies can be easy, relaxing, and fun! Come learn the basics of fly-tying and learn how flies can imitate insects and other foods to fool various species of fish.

You Got Game?

January 28 • Thursday • 7–9 PM

Registration begins January 2 (ages 5–adult)

Outdoor enthusiasts always have questions about care and usage of nature's bounty and we have answers. Learn how to care for game taken from the field and then prepare it for the table. Taste samples of wild game from fish to venison. Copies of favorite recipes will be available. Come enjoy a wild game taste-testing treat. *Priority will be given to first-time attendees.*

Little Acorns programs are listed on page 5.

A Sand County Almanac

Book Discussions

February 2, 9, 16, & 23 • Tuesday • 10–11:30 AM

February 4, 11, 18, & 25 • Thursday • 6:30–8 PM

Registration begins January 15 (ages 15–adult)

We encourage you to read for the first time or re-read *A Sand County Almanac* by Aldo Leopold—one of the most respected and beloved books about the natural world ever published. Weekly book discussions will be led by retired Springfield-Greene County Librarian Lorraine Sandstrom on Tuesday mornings or by Reference Associate and Volunteer Naturalist Kimberly Duquette on Thursday evenings.



Springfield Conservation Nature Center

4601 S. Nature Center Way, Springfield, MO 65804 • mdc.mo.gov/node/287

Exploring Your Land Ethic Through The Works Of Aldo Leopold

January 29 • Friday • 7–8 PM

Registration begins December 15 (ages 12–adult)

In *A Sand County Almanac*, Aldo Leopold set forth his most enduring idea, the “land ethic,” a moral responsibility of humans to the natural world. This idea is relevant in today’s society, but it can be difficult to define, discuss, and implement. To begin this task, we need leaders who are committed to building a land ethic at the grass roots level in communities everywhere, including Springfield and surrounding areas. Through observation, participation, and reflection, we will explore, develop, and understand our own personal land ethic which in turn gives us the skills, tools, and inspiration to put this ethic to work in our own backyard and beyond. The evening will include Leopold-inspired original live music performed by Curt Carter, a certified facilitator with the Leopold Education Project and half of the well-known folk duo *Carter and Connelley*.

Leopold Education Project Training

January 30 • Saturday • 8:30 AM–12 NOON

Registration begins December 15 (ages 15–adult)

Parents, educators (formal and non-formal), and leaders are invited to an introductory Leopold Education Project training presented by certified facilitators Celeste Prussia and Curt Carter. Using Leopold’s book, *A Sand County Almanac*, you will participate in a variety of hands-on outdoor explorations to help you “read the land.” Activities are designed to be shared to help others discover nature and to instill a land ethic among tomorrow’s stewards. Required workshop materials cost \$20. Please bring a check payable to *Missouri State University*. Dress for the outdoors.

February Events

Conservation TEEN Club Hercules Glades Hike

February 6 • Saturday • 9 AM–4 PM

Registration begins January 15 (ages 12–17)

Join us to explore the Hercules Glades Wilderness Area. Dress for the weather. Lunch and transportation will be provided.

Badge Bonanza

February 9 • Tuesday • 6:30–8 PM

Registration begins January 15 (ages 6–adult)

Attention all scouting and youth organizations! Here’s a program to help you earn nature badges. The focus will be on venomous animals, conservation careers, and knot tying. Program is also open to the public.

Story Time With Ms. Ladybug

February 10 • Wednesday • 11–11:30 AM

No registration required (ages 2–6)

Join Volunteer Naturalist Joyce Tolliver as she reads a nature story and shares activities with your 2–6 year olds. Please, no organized groups.

Discover Nature Fishing Lecture Series—Walleye Fishing

February 10 • Wednesday • 7–8:30 PM

Registration begins January 15 (ages 7–adult)

Missouri is blessed with some of the premier walleye fishing opportunities in the region. These toothy critters are not only fun to catch but absolutely delicious in the frying pan! Come learn about current walleye research and management activities from Fisheries Management Biologist Ben Parnell. Marty Thompson, from Thompson Fishing Guide Service, will also present on walleye fishing techniques on Stockton Lake. This is one of several indoor programs aimed to put more fish on the end of your line!

Hiking Club

February 13 • Saturday • 8:15 AM–2 PM

Registration begins February 2 (ages 18–adult)

Trek the trails of Little Sac Woods Conservation Area with Volunteer Naturalist Sandy Vaughn. Meet at the nature center and carpool. Bring a sack lunch and water and wear comfortable hiking shoes. Hike is four miles and *rated moderate in difficulty*.

Owl Prowl

February 19 • Friday • 7–8:30 PM

Registration begins February 2 (all ages)

Nesting season comes early for owls and they’re already hooting in anticipation. Dickerson Park Zoo will join us for a close-up look at live owls. We’ll also head outside and try to call wild owls during a guided hike. Bring a flashlight.

Nature Art With A Chinese Brushstroke

February 20 • Saturday • 1–2:30 PM OR 2:45–4:15 PM

Registration begins February 2 (ages 8–adult)

Art instructor and nature enthusiast Hing Wah Hatch will increase your powers of observation as she demonstrates, step-by-step, how to capture the essence of local plants and animals through Chinese-style painting. Participants will go home with more nature knowledge and their own artistic masterpiece.

Conservation Kids’ Club

Love Is In The Air

February 23 • Tuesday • 6:30–7:45 PM

Registration begins February 2 (ages 7–12)

Ever wonder how animals find their special valentine? From squawking and hooting to sporting strong-smelling scents, we’ll discover some of the interesting ways animals find each other in the wild during this special Valentine’s Day celebration of animal courtship. Please, no younger siblings and only one adult per group of kids.

Temporary Exhibits

January • Nature’s Ice Sculptures

Photography by Joel Wolverton

February • Artwork

by Studio 55 Fine Arts Guild

Special Delivery—The Beauty Of Plant-Pollinator Partnerships

February 26 • Friday • 7–8 PM

Registration begins February 2 (ages 12–adult)

The amazing beauty and complexity of flowers, butterflies, and bees are largely the result of one of the oldest professions—the exchange of nectar rewards for the transport of pollen by insects. Insect pollination is ecologically and economically essential. Missouri State University Biology Professor Dr. Chris Barnhart will describe some of the recent discoveries about pollinator partnerships, some of which are threatened by climate change, invasive species, pesticides, and other impacts.

Please limit to one per month.

Little Acorns

Programs are 45 minutes in length.

January Events

Registration begins January 2 (ages 3–6)

Terrific Trout

January 22 • Friday • 11 AM or 1:30 PM

January 23 • Saturday • 11 AM

Take a journey through the trout’s life cycle and learn how to catch these terrific and tasty fish.

Calling All Owls

January 27 • Wednesday • 11 AM or 1:30 PM

January 30 • Saturday • 11 AM

Who-o-o-o hoots when it gets dark? Who-o-o-o goes out for food at night? Is it a wise old owl? Bring your children during daylight hours to learn about owls.

February Events

Groundhog Day

February 5 • Friday • 11 AM or 1:30 PM

February 6 • Saturday • 11 AM

Registration begins January 15 (ages 3–6)

It’s February and time to celebrate groundhogs.

Will spring be early or late? Only the shadow knows. Come out to learn about groundhogs and their shadows.

Skunk Scurry

February 16 • Tuesday • 11 AM or 1:30 PM

February 20 • Saturday • 11 AM

Registration begins February 2 (ages 3–6)

There’s more to a skunk than its smell. “Sniff out” some amazing skunk facts, learn a pre-spray skunk “dance,” and take home a craft that won’t stink.

Tail Tales

February 26 • Friday • 11 AM or 1:30 PM

February 27 • Saturday • 11 AM

Registration begins February 2 (ages 3–6)

Come hear some tales of how wild animals use their tails to help them survive.

Shepherd of the Hills Fish Hatchery and Conservation Center

483 Hatchery Road, Branson, MO 65616 • mdc.mo.gov/node/290



The Fish Hatchery and Conservation Center is located on 221 acres in Branson off Highway 165 next to Table Rock Dam. Outdoors, visitors will experience an active fish hatchery with 700,000 rainbow and brown trout in 30 pools with opportunities to feed the fish. Indoors, enjoy a 3,500 gallon aquarium and hands-on nature exhibits and purchase hunting and fishing permits. The area also features four hiking trails, a picnic area, a boat ramp, and access to Lake Taneycomo.

FACILITY HOURS:

June–July–August:

Sunday–Saturday: 9 AM–6 PM

Remainder of Year

Sunday–Saturday: 9 AM–5 PM

Closed all state holidays

AREA AND TRAIL HOURS:

4 AM–10 PM

The area is open to fishing 24 hours daily, but special permits and regulations do apply. Check the current fishing regulations or call for details.

TO REGISTER FOR A PROGRAM:

Programs are free. Call **417-334-4865**, Ext. 0, to sign up for a program requiring registration. If you are unable to attend a program, please call and cancel as a courtesy to those on the waiting list.

FISHING LAKE TANEYCOMO:

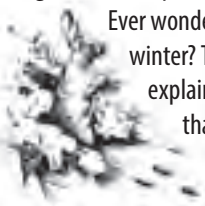
Before fishing on Lake Taneycomo, become familiar with the regulations and restrictions. Come by for a free brochure of the entire lake including fishing accesses. For specific details about trout fishing here and across the state, visit mdc.mo.gov/node/5603.

January and February Events

Animals In Winter And Backyard Habitat

January 16 • Saturday • 10–11:30 AM

Registration required (ages 12 and up)



Ever wonder what animals do in the winter? This program will help explain the four main strategies that animals undertake to survive the extreme cold conditions. We will also give you tips on how to plan for great wildlife habitat in your backyard. Creating habitat this winter will pay off this spring and summer with more wildlife to enjoy.

Winter Tree ID

January 30 • Saturday • 10–11:45 AM

Registration required (ages 12 and up)

Believe it or not, identifying trees in the winter is sometimes easier than in the spring. This class will give you tips on identifying some of our most common trees in the Ozarks. Dress for the weather because this will be a fun outdoor hike.

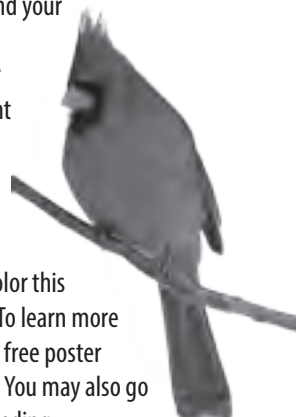
Birds That Stay Home

Just because some of our more famous bird residents, such as geese, hummingbirds, and warblers, have flown south for the winter, it does not mean that we don't have spectacular winter bird viewing. There are some birds that stay at home in what we humans call a "staycation." Some of our more beautiful birds, such as cardinals, blue jays, and woodpeckers, grace our backyards all winter. In doing so, we get great enjoyment from their splashes of color, especially on snowy days. One of our most acrobatic native birds is the white-breasted nuthatch. It is one of the few birds in the Ozarks that can actually walk headfirst down a tree. The challenge of winter bird feeding is to find your favorite bird.

To enhance your enjoyment of these birds and to help attract your favorites, put out small bird feeders this winter. There are many different styles of feeders, but the best seed to attract the most birds is black oil sunflower seed. Birdseed that is a "mix" is less desirable than straight black oil sunflower seed. Finally, place your feeder near a window for you to enjoy.

Winter birds who stay home will frequently give you a splash of color this winter. We hope you keep your feeder filled and watch them regularly. To learn more about winter birds and the best seeds for your feeder you may pick up a free poster called *Feeding Backyard Birds* from any Conservation Department office. You may also go online to mdc.mo.gov/node/18715 for more tips on backyard bird feeding.

—John Miller, Interpretive Center Manager



Holiday

Closings:

January 1 • New Year's Day and January 18 • Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

February 12 • Lincoln Day and February 15 • Washington's Birthday

Southwest Regional Office

2630 N. Mayfair Avenue, Springfield, MO 65803 • mdc.mo.gov/node/257

Getting Prepared For The Upcoming Trout Season

Most anglers have been cooped up all winter, but now that the days are getting longer we begin to yearn for the trout waters and an opportunity to catch one of Missouri's beautiful rainbow trout. Now is the time when we need to pull out our gear and make our pre-season checks so that we will have a fun and successful trout fishing trip. Below are a few things to help you get started.

Flies. Organize your flies and discard any old and unsuccessful lures that you have lying in your tackle box. It is also a good idea to organize any that are left so they can be easily accessed when fishing. Humans are sometimes forgetful, so it is also a good time to put your contact information in the box so when you leave it on that rock while taking off your waders, you can be contacted.

Line. Take the line off your fly reel and inspect and clean it. It is best to soak the line in warm soapy water. This will help to clean any debris and oil that has accumulated over the past year. After you are finished, make sure to dry the line with a cloth and run your fingers over it, making sure there are no cuts or rough spots.

Reel maintenance. After you have removed all the line, clean your reel of any debris that has collected over the past season. Make sure to remove any old lubricant with a degreaser and add fresh lubricant where needed.

Rod maintenance. Rods usually stay in good shape, but take the time to look it over and make sure that there are no stressed areas and that the eyelets are secure.

Waders. Check your waders for any leaks. Fold the top of your waders, trapping the air inside, then submerge them in water and see if you have any bubbles escaping to the surface. If you do, locate the hole, mark it, and make repairs.

Knots. We use different knots for different types of lures. Now is the time to practice tying different types of knots. Make it become second nature so that you can easily change lures as needed.

Casting. Practice, Practice, Practice. Casting is something that we need to practice many times before we go fishing. Try different casting techniques so you will be able to place the lure wherever you want under any conditions.

Bucket List. Make a bucket list of the different areas that offer a unique opportunity to catch trout. One example is fishing on one of Missouri's Blue Ribbon Areas so that you may have the chance to catch a wild trout. Another is to visit all four trout parks where you have an opportunity to earn a grand slam patch for catching and releasing a lunker at each of the parks. Whatever it may be, be sure to get out and enjoy a day of fishing.

New to trout fishing? Take advantage of this opportunity to learn the basics of the sport by attending *Discover Nature Fishing—Introduction To Trout Fishing* held at Walter Woods Conservation Area on February 26. For more information about this class, see page 2. If you would like to learn to tie your own flies, participate in a class or watch a fly-tying demonstration at the Springfield Conservation Nature Center on January 23. See page 4 for details.

— Mike Perry, Assistant Hatchery Manager, Bennett Spring Fish Hatchery



The Southwest Regional Office is conveniently located just west of the intersection of US-65 and Kearney in Springfield. The public may obtain information on land management, nuisance wildlife, educational opportunities, river and pond management, and more, as well as purchase hunting and fishing permits and obtain area brochures for Conservation Department areas.

HOURS: Monday–Friday: 8 AM–5 PM
Closed all state holidays

PHONE: 417-895-6880

Hunter Education Sessions

Classroom (Knowledge) Sessions

| Location | Date/Time |
|--|---|
| Springfield Conservation Nature Center | January 8 • Friday • 6–10 PM February 5 • Friday • 6–10 PM |

Skills Sessions

| Location | Date/Time |
|--|---|
| Springfield Conservation Nature Center | January 9 • Saturday • 8 AM–12 NOON or 1–5 PM February 13, Saturday • 8 AM–12 NOON or 1–5 PM |
| Andy Dalton Shooting Range | January 2 • Saturday • 8 AM–12 NOON February 6 • Saturday • 8 AM–12 NOON |
| Wildcat Glades Conservation & Audubon Center | January 11 • Monday • 6–10 PM February 16 • Tuesday • 6–10 PM |

Reminder

Hunter Education certification has two parts: knowledge and skills. You must complete and pass **BOTH** sessions to earn your certificate. For more information on Hunter Education, contact your local Missouri Department of Conservation office or visit the Conservation Department website at on.mo.gov/1JkL7uU.

Visit on.mo.gov/1LFGst1 to register for these sessions and to check for session changes and/or other locations.



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Missouri Department of Conservation

Conservation Showcase:

Wah-Sha-She Prairie

LOCATION: In addition to its natural attractions in summer (native wildflowers, grassland songbirds, and butterflies to name a few), this 160-acre prairie in Jasper County is a site that receives frequent visits from a number of raptor species in winter. From Asbury, take Missouri Highway 171 north approximately 2 miles, then Route M east for approximately 0.75 mile. The area consists of a 10-acre wetland area with the rest being native prairie.



Wah-Sha-She Prairie is owned by The Nature Conservancy and managed by the Missouri Department of Conservation. It is one of the state's designated natural areas.

HISTORY: The background of the term "Wah-Sha-She" has an interesting, though somewhat conflicting, explanation. Some say it's an Osage term meaning "the water people." Another explanation is that "Wah-Zha-Zhe" is what the tribe called itself when French explorer Jacques Marquette encountered them in the 17th century. The map Marquette produced in 1673 identified the tribe using a different version of this name—the "Ouchage." This was eventually corrupted into "Osage."

NATURE VIEWING: Like any native prairie, Wah-Sha-She has nature-viewing opportunities throughout the year, but one of the winter bird-viewing treats is a chance to see a variety of raptors. Northern harriers, sharp-shinned hawks, Cooper's hawks, Swainson's hawks, red-tailed hawks, rough-legged hawks, merlins, prairie falcons, and bald eagles are among the 91 bird species listed by the Audubon Society as having been sighted at Wah-Sha-She. To see the main reason raptors frequent Wah-Sha-She in winter, and other Missouri prairie areas as well, look no further than the landscape. The thick, grassy vegetation is home to mice, voles, rabbits, and other small mammals—all of which are food items for raptors. Two other hunting birds that have been sighted at Wah-Sha-She are great horned owls and short-eared owls. Like other types of birding, binoculars and some type of bird identification literature are helpful to bring along on a trip to Wah-Sha-She. The Missouri Department of Conservation's free booklet *Missouri's Raptors* is a handy guide for bird identification.

HUNTING: No hunting is permitted at Wah-Sha-She Prairie.

HIKING AND CAMPING: Wah-Sha-She Prairie has no designated hiking trails, but this adds to the unspoiled beauty of this native grassland site. An added bonus to visiting the site in winter is the absence of ticks, chiggers, or any other stinging or biting insects. Also, don't be deterred by cold weather. Bundle up and expect to see a greater diversity of raptor species at prairie areas. Prolonged cold spells here often increase the chance of seeing unusual or migrant species because if it's cold here, it's usually even colder in the northern parts of the United States and this facilitates bird movement to the south. Camping is not allowed at Wah-Sha-She.

For more information on the Wah-Sha-She Prairie, visit the Missouri Department of Conservation website at mdc.mo.gov/node/a7411.

—Francis Skalicky, Media Specialist